Infrastructure on Buddhist sector

1760. SHRI KUSHOK THIKSEY: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister on his recent visit to Japan and address to Chambers of Commerce at Kansai (OSAKA) have pledged to improve the infrastructure on Buddhist sectors to woo Japanese tourists;

(b) whether it is also a fact that he had promised to open new routes in Ladakh to the foreign tourists; and

(c) if the answer to part (a) and (b) are in the affirmative, the steps being taken by Government to improve the infrastructure on Buddhist sector and which new destinations are being opened in Ladakh?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) Prime Minister had remarked during his speech delivered by him at the Business Meeting at Osaka: "Tourism in India is another area where both the need and the scope for Japanese Investment are very large. Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India such as Ajanta, Ellora, Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Varanasi, and Sanchi have always attracted many Japanese tourists and pilgrims. We will further improve facilities on the Buddhist circuit, and seek Japanese collaboration in this endeavour."

(b) No, Sir. Prime Minister had not talked about Ladakh.

(c) Infrastructure development project in Buddhist circuit in U.P. and Bihar was carried out by Undertaking loan of 7.7 billion Yen from OECF (now known as Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The project covered Sarnath, Kushinagar and Piprahawa, Sravasti in Uttar Pradesh and Bodhgaya, Nalanda, Rajgir and Vaishali in Bihar. The Project was completed in December, 1998. Government of Uttar Pradesh wants assistance for development of second phase of Buddhist circuit with an estimated outlay of Rs.1020 crores. The same has

been recommended to Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance to take up the proposal with the Japanese Government for funding.

With assistance of OECF (now known as Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), Ajanta Ellora Conservation and Tourism Development Project was undertaken in Maharashtra. Loan agreement for 3.745 billion Yen was signed in January, 1992. First phase has already been completed in March 1999 and extension phase is to be completed by March, 2002. Government of Maharashtra wants assistance for Phase II of project with an estimated outlay of Rs.522.07 crores. The same has been recommended to Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance to take up the proposal with the Japanese Government for funding.

The matter of improvement of roads was taken up by Department of Tourism with the Ministry of Roads Transport and National Highways. The following works have been sanctioned accordingly:—

(i) Improvement of riding quality in km 0 to 46 Biharsarif-Rajgir Hisua Section of NH-82.

(ii) Rehabilitation of pavement on NH-82 Hisua-Gaya Section (km 46 to 67).

(iii) Improvement of riding quality Hisua-Gaya-Bodhgaya section from 67.2 to 106 km of NH-82.

Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd. (HUDCO) has been commissioned to prepare a Master Plan with focus on tourism and conservation for Bodhgaya.

Hotel Industry of Infrastructure sector

1761. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recognized the hotel industry as an infrastructure sector since it has been a sub-sector to tourism;

(b) if not, whether Government plans on this issue; and

(c) in what manner Government are using the international offices